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THE HISTORIAN AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: A PROPOSAL FOR A GOVERNMENT-WIDE HISTORICAL OFFICE

LOUIS MORTON

Almost since its inception, the federal government has supported the publication of historical works related first to its founding and later to its subsequent activities and relations with other nations. Imbued with a sense of history and aware that they were embarked on a great adventure in government, members of the early Congress authorized the printing of *The Journals of the Continental Congress.* In 1818 the government printed *The Journal of the Constitutional Convention* and two years later *The Secret Journals of the Continental Congress,* followed in 1832 by the *Diplomatic Correspondence* prepared by the State Department.[1]

During the next few years, the federal government took a new approach to the publication of historical sources. Instead of having the work done directly by the government, it used the same method employed in the purchase of other goods and services—by contracting out for the work. In 1832 it contracted with Gales and Seaton, publishers of the *Annals of Congress,* and with Matthew St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force for two separate series of documents. The first, completed in 1861, resulted in the *American State Papers* in thirty-eight volumes; the second, completed in 1853, in the nine-volume *Documentary History of the American Revolution,* popularly known as Force's *American Archives.* The *Foreign Relations* series was inaugurated in 1861, the year the *American State Papers* was completed, and has been published continuously since. Other major collections of documents published by the federal government include James D. Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* and *The Official Records of the War of The Rebellion,* the largest and most expensive documentary collection published up to that time. When completed it numbered 128 volumes (not counting the thirty naval volumes) and cost almost three million dollars. The *Territorial Papers of the United States* was begun in 1931, first under the aegis of the State Department and later of the National Archives. By 1971 the *Territorial Papers* consisted of twenty-seven volumes, with another scheduled to appear in the near future.

The federal government has also supported in whole or in part the publication of the papers of the Founding Fathers and of some of the most important figures in the nation's history. This program began in 1840 with the publi-

[1] For a detailed description of the history and organization of the historical programs of the various agencies of the federal government, see Walter Rundell, Jr., "Uncle Sam the Historian: Federal Historical Activities," *The Historian* 33 (November 1970): 1-20. The author has drawn heavily in the survey that follows on this excellent summary as well as his own personal knowledge and interviews with participants in these programs.

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cation of James Madison's papers, a new edition appearing after the Civil War. The papers of Adams, Jefferson, and Hamilton followed shortly after. Between 1931 and 1944, thirty-nine volumes of Washington's papers edited by John C. Fitzpatrick were published. Another edition including incoming letters is now in preparation by the University of Virginia with the assistance of the National Historical Publications Commission, a part of the National Archives and Records Service. The commission has also provided guidance and financial support from public and private funds for editing the papers of many of the great figures in American history—Adams, Jefferson, Webster, Calhoun, Clay, and others. More recently, the commission has supported the microfilming of major collections of documents, which, like the Library of Congress microfilms of presidential papers, are available to scholars everywhere on interlibrary loan.

Until fairly recently, virtually all historical works published or sponsored by the federal government consisted of documentary collections. The publication of documents and other source materials rather than narrative histories raised few problems for government officials. Documents that were restricted or confidential in nature could easily be excluded and each reader could draw whatever conclusion he wished from the published documents. Editorial comment could be kept to a minimum; and, allowing for a sufficient period of time between preparation and publication of the documents, little harm could be done by making them available. On the other hand, sponsorship of critical narrative histories by the federal government raised a host of thorny problems.[2] Could historians working for a government agency or under contract to the government write objective history? Would they have access to all the records? Would other historians have equal access so that they could check the work or disagree with the interpretation? For what audience should government history be written—for officials within the government or for the public? Who would pass on the qualifications of the authors to write history? Who would review the finished manuscript and pass on its publication? Should government history be anonymous, like most government publications, or should authorship be credited? If so, does responsibility for the contents rest with the individual author or with the agency? These and other considerations prompted Secretary of War Newton D. Baker to veto the proposal for a narrative history of American forces in World War I.

The bar to critical narrative history written under government sponsorship was broken by Franklin Roosevelt during the early years of the Second World War when he directed that "an accurate and objective account" of the war be prepared. The military services, which were most directly involved and already had historical offices, responded by organizing historical programs staffed by professional historians in uniform to write a narrative history of the war. Those government agencies that did not already have historical offices followed suit, though not all elected to prepare narrative history. The results achieved by these World War II historical programs, though spotty, warranted their continuation after the war and the establishment of additional programs when new agencies were created. At the present time, nine of the twelve executive departments and four independent agencies maintain historical programs of some sort.

[2] Louis Morton, "The Writing of Official History," *Army* 11 (May 1961): 38-39; Martin Blumenson, "Can Official History Be Honest History?" *Military Affairs* 26 (Winter 1962-63): 153-161.

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It would be tedious and quite unnecessary for our purpose to describe each of these programs in detail. Largest, most varied, and perhaps the best known of the government programs are those of the Department of Defense, which include historical offices with the secretary of defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the army, navy, air force, and marines, as well as the major commands of the services in the United States and overseas.

Each of the historical sections of the military services has published narrative histories of its participation in World War II and Korea, some of which is of high professional caliber, and continues to publish histories of past and present operations. In addition, they perform a variety of other services for the staff, some of which is only distantly related to history. Neither the office of the secretary of defense nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff publish histories, though the historians of the joint chiefs do write narrative histories. These manuscripts are highly classified, however, and their use is restricted to authorized personnel.

The histories of World War II proved that historians working under official sponsorship and even under direct military control could produce objective narrative history equal to the best efforts of academic historians.[3] Perhaps the best of these is the *U.S. Army in World War II*. This series, produced under the editorship first of Kent Roberts Greenfield and more recently of Stetson Conn and Maurice Matloff, is based on primary sources and maintains a high level of historical scholarship. Numbering now almost seventy volumes, the series includes studies of strategic planning, logistics, manpower, and combat in all theaters. For the student of the Second World War it constitutes an absolutely essential source. The air force series, issued separately though the air force was part of the army during the war, comprises seven volumes published under the editorship of Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate by the University of Chicago Press. Like the army series, it was prepared almost entirely by professional historians who had received their military experience during the war and elected to continue their work after the war.

The navy took a somewhat different tack in preparing its history of World War II. An administrative history, written by professional naval officers under the supervision of the Naval History Division, was published by the Government Printing Office, but the widely read fifteen-volume *History of U.S. Naval Operations* during the war was the work of Samuel Eliot Morison written under contract with a commercial publisher but with full access to the navy's records and support from the Naval History Division.

Nothing comparable to the World War II histories, either in quality or quantity, resulted from the war in Korea, although each of the military services by now had a large and experienced historical staff. The navy and the air force each published a volume on the war, the former under a contract with James A. Field. The army has four volumes planned for Korea, only two of which have been published so far. Each of the services including the marines has published other materials intended for internal use. None has yet published a history of the war in Vietnam, but the army has unveiled plans for an ambitious eight-volume operational series, and the other services have plans of their own.

Second only to the Defense Department's historical program in terms of manpower and publications is that of

[3] Louis Morton, *Writings on World War II*, American Historical Association, Service Center for Teachers of History Publication no. 66 (Washington, 1967); Morton, "Sources for the History of World War II," *World Politics* 13 (April 1961).

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the State Department. Its major activity continues to be the documentary *Foreign Relations* series, an indispensable source for all students of American foreign policy.[4] The series is up to date through 1945, but with the increased role of the United States in world affairs after World War II and the multiplication of records and functions of the State Department, it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the series current. This problem is a matter of serious concern for historians since State Department archives are open for research, subject to permission, through those years covered by the series, that is, up to 1945. Records more recent than that year remain closed.

Other executive departments that maintain historical offices are the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Health, Education and Welfare, Labor, and Transportation. The first has had a historical program under a different name since the 1920s and has published several works of importance for agricultural historians—a *Bibliography of the History of Agriculture in the United States,* a history of the Department of Agriculture, and other works. More recently, its duties have been expanded to include the publication of bulletins, staff studies for the secretary, and other materials. It serves also as the secretariat for the Agricultural Historical Society. Interior's historical activity is confined to the National Park Service, which not only publishes handbooks familiar to the thousands of visitors to the various historical and battlefield sites, but also a more scholarly series dealing with historical places and themes such as Indian affairs. Established more recently are the historical offices in the Departments of Labor, Transportation, and HEW, which have published little thus far. Historians in these agencies seem to be concerned mostly with records, bibliography, oral history, and with providing information and background studies for their superiors.

Of the independent agencies, two have developed substantial historical programs: the Atomic Energy Commission and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The first, with a very small staff headed by Richard Hewlett, has concentrated on writing a full-scale narrative history of the agency, two volumes of which have appeared so far, both published by a university press. The first of these, *The New World,* is one of the best histories produced in any government historical office; the second volume has only just appeared. The NASA historical office, established in 1959, has published a series of detailed chronologies on space and several historical volumes written under contract with private scholars. The most recent of these is Constance Green's history of the Vanguard project.

In addition to these historical programs and published histories, the federal government supports in one way or another a variety of activities of interest to historians. Certainly the activities and programs of the National Archives and Records Service and Library of Congress are of vital concern to all American historians. But these two agencies do more than collect and maintain original sources; they prepare inventories of

[4] Richard W. Leopold, "The Foreign Relations Series: A Centennial Estimate," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (March 1963): 595-612.

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their holdings, calendars of papers, finding aids to specific collections, and elaborate guides, such as those relating to the Civil War and World War II.[5] Since 1951 the National Archives through its National Historical Publications Commission has been publishing the *Writings on American History*—a task it will soon discontinue. The National Archives also conducts conferences on topics of interest to historians, maintains a publishing program of its own, and publishes the journal *Prologue*. The presidential libraries, which are also under the National Archives, have their own publication programs. The recent three-volume *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs*, a collection of documents edited by Edgar Nixon and published by the Harvard University Press, is an example. The publication of these documents by Harvard has become the focus of a controversy as a result of charges made by Francis L. Loewenheim of Rice University.[6]

The Library of Congress, especially its Manuscript Division, also prepares finding aids and guides, including the multivolume *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*. In addition, the library maintained a center for the coordination of foreign manuscript copying and publishes a *Quarterly Journal* that contains articles of interest to many historians.

The Smithsonian Institution, devoted primarily to science and technology, offers the historian documentation of a different kind, a rich and varied collection of physical, nonliterary sources of the American past. Though it maintains perhaps the most popular tourist attraction in Washington, the Smithsonian's first duty is the advancement of knowledge and for this purpose it has a corps of resident scholars. During the past few years, the Smithsonian has paid increasing attention to history and expanded its activities in fields of interest to historians, including an American studies program. Recently it has added to its staff Daniel J. Boorstin of Chicago. It has even offered grants and other forms of financial assistance to historians, a practice made possible by the fact that under its charter it is partly a private institution with its own board of regents. In 1966 it began publication of the *Smithsonian Journal of History*, but the venture did not prosper and has since been discontinued. It has also established its own press and now publishes pamphlets on a variety of topics as well as books.

This brief survey of the federal government's support of historical activities hardly does justice to the variety and complexity of government history programs or the variety of tasks performed by government historians. If nothing else, it makes clear the commitment of the federal government to history and the importance to the historical profession of ensuring the continuation of these programs while seeking to maintain and raise the quality of historical work produced in these programs.

[5] H. G. Jones, *Records of a Nation* (New York, 1968).

[6] See the *Final Report* of the Joint AHA-OAH Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate the Charges against the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Related Matters, Aug. 24, 1970, and "A Statement in Rebuttal" by Francis L. Loewenheim, Dec. 12, 1970.

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Closely related to this matter of quality is personnel. The problem for all historical agencies in the government is to find qualified historians who are willing to leave academic life for government employment. And even if they do find qualified historians, it is not always possible to hire them under civil service regulations. Aside from the question of numbers—and we do not really know how many "historians" are employed by the federal government—there is the question of nomenclature. It is not at all clear that all those whom the Civil Service Commission classifies as historians would be so regarded by their academic brethren. Moreover, some government historians write for internal consumption rather than the public on the theory that the expenditure of public funds is only justified if it contributes to the performance of the agency's function. And if the work is classified, it cannot be judged by other historians. Such an arrangement is hardly calculated to attract high caliber professionals whose reputation and mobility rest on the judgment of their peers. It means, further, that historians in the government can be and are assigned all sorts of tasks, useful to the agency perhaps but which bear little relationship to history. It is true that some of the agencies that maintain historical offices have advisory committees consisting of outside scholars, but these meet once or at most twice a year, usually for one day, and they can have little or no effect on day-to-day operations. Finally, there is the problem of security and access. This is not a simple problem, nor is it confined to the military services. Census data since 1890 are barred to outsiders, and so are recent records of the State Department. The U.S. government has no single rule on access such as a thirty-year rule; each department and agency makes its own rules and in some instances even congressional records are not open.

There is no doubt that much, if not most, of what is now closed to private scholars could be made available without any damage whatever to national interests or to individuals. But in the mass of classified material there are undoubtedly many documents, perhaps ten percent, whose disclosure would violate individual rights, reveal vital information to a potential enemy, or inhibit the effective exchange of confidential and private communications between government officials. How to identify and separate this ten percent from the rest is the nub of the problem and no one has yet found the answer, though a number of proposals have been made.[7] To separate the sensitive material, considering the bulk of the records, would be a vastly expensive and time-consuming operation; to open *all* records twenty or thirty years old is risky. And the tendency of bureaucrats always is to play it safe.

The major impression one is left with after surveying the government's historical programs is the diversity and unevenness of historical activity in Washington. As academicians we are accustomed to finding historians assembled in one place on a campus—a history department, usually in a division of

[7] See Ernest R. May, "A Case for 'Court Historians,'" Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, *Perspectives in American History* 3 (1969): 413-432; Herbert Feis, "The Shackled Historian," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1967, pp. 332-343.

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the social sciences or the humanities. Within the government, however, we find historians organized in a variety of ways and allied with activities and functions unrelated to what we regard as the work of the historian—with public relations, intelligence, and records. In some agencies, historians work near the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy; while they profit from this access to the source of power, they are also most exposed in time of crisis. In other agencies, historians are placed in the very bowels of the bureaucracy, safe from interference but far removed from the action.

We are accustomed also, as academicians, to finding historians performing simultaneously two tasks—teaching and research—unless they are unfortunate enough, as so many are, to be called to administration. But government historians, while they perform many administrative chores, do not teach, though perhaps it would be well if they could occasionally give a lesson in history to policymakers. And not all of them do research or write history. In fact, a great many do not function as historians at all. What do they do then? They keep records or assure that proper records are made and preserved, prepare reports for their superiors, provide information for the staff and the public, write speeches, prepare background studies for internal use, and perform a number of other service functions. On occasion, historians may serve in a staff or operating capacity as intelligence or policy analysts, as they do in the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department.

Historians may even serve in policymaking roles, though it must be admitted that the number who have done so is very small. It is not at all clear, as a matter of fact, that the historian has anything unique to contribute to the solution of current problems, or that he possesses any special qualifications not possessed by others for the analysis of policy and the making of decisions. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the historian in his professional capacity *should* concern himself with current policy issues. After all, how contemporary can the historian be and still retain the perspective and objectivity on which he prides himself—assuming that the records he needs are available to him?[8]

Even when historians function in their professional capacity in government agencies, they may perform quite different tasks. Some may be utilized essentially as editors of documents—the oldest type of historical activity by the government and one that perhaps has greater validity for a government agency than narrative or interpretive history. And even those who write narrative histories for a government agency do not always pursue their work in quite the same way historians usually do. Ordinarily, historians work at a slow pace compared to the schedules of government activity, which are established on a weekly or monthly basis. They may work for months or longer with nothing to show but notes. To say the least, this can be terribly frustrating to their administrative superiors, who may insist on written drafts at regular periods.

[8] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Historian and History," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1963, pp. 491-497; Louis Morton, "The Cold War and American Scholarship," in *The Historian and the Diplomat*, ed. Francis L. Loewenheim (New York, 1967), pp. 123-169.

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Also, most of us write with the hope of publication and ultimately of judgment by our peers through reviews in learned journals. This is the way ordinarily that quality is insured and objectivity tested. But much of the history written for the government—how much we do not know—is never tested in this way simply because it is never published, not for lack of a publisher but because it is regarded as a document for internal use rather than to inform the public. How can we judge such work and who profits from it? And some histories, such as those written for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are so highly classified that they are, in effect, written for the files. So far as we know, literally no one except a handful of officers can read them.

The histories that are ultimately published vary greatly in scope and quality. Some of it is very good, meeting in all respects the standards of the profession; some indifferent and inferior. They range in size from a single volume covering the activities of an entire department over a significant time span to multivolume series covering in the greatest detail the operations of a single office. Sheer bulk is no guarantee of completeness and often the most important activities of a department or agency, those that would most interest the public, may not be treated at all. Nowhere in this vast array of historical activity is there any sign of a single directing intelligence, any evidence of a plan to produce an integrated history of the whole or to insure that essential matters are covered.

The proposed history of the war in Vietnam by the military services is a case in point. Each of the services has ambitious plans for a history of its operations and presumably the historians of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will write their own history which none of us will see. But there will be no overall history on the Defense Department level and, more importantly, none that will treat those aspects of the war that are of greatest interest to the public. Such a history could only be written at the White House level, or perhaps within the Executive Office, with access to the files of the National Security Council, State, Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA, and other agencies of the government.

How do we secure such history? How do we assure that important policies and activities of the government are not neglected or overlooked, that when new agencies or offices are established a historian is present to record its birth and to watch its painful growth? How do we eliminate duplication of effort? How do we make sure that historians are utilized properly and not as speech writers or reference librarians or public relations officers, that they are given professional status and adequate compensation? What measures must we take to guarantee the quality, accuracy, and objectivity of the history written? What can we do to open the records while safeguarding national interests and individual rights, to ensure that all private scholars are treated equally in government archives?

There are no easy answers to these questions and I do not pretend to have any. But I do have a suggestion. The greatest weakness, it seems to me, is the lack of a single, coordinating body, a historical office on a high enough level to cut through departmental bureaucracy and to establish government-wide policy. The creation of such an office, headed by a distinguished (perhaps emeritus) historian, in the Executive Office of the President or the Office of Management and Budget would do much to meet some of the problems. It need not be a large office; perhaps three or four people—an assistant and one or two secretarial aides. It would have no responsibility for writing history—only insuring that it is written. It would not review the work of historians, but would see to it that review procedures

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were established and that such review would not be a cloak for censorship. It would attempt to secure quality in the only way that it can be obtained: first, by finding the best historians possible for the federal government; second, by creating the conditions necessary for research and writing and protecting historians from interference; and, finally, by assuring open publication with authorship credit so that historians can be judged by their peers.

One man cannot do all this alone, but properly placed in the hierarchy he can do much. His directives concerning general policies would come from the highest level, backed by the authority of the Executive Office. If necessary, these directives could be followed by personal visits. Freedom to deal directly through professional channels with historians in all departments and on every level would have to be established. If this were done, information could flow freely both ways.

A historian on the level of the Executive Office would be a powerful voice for the profession, in and out of government. He would provide historians with direct access to the White House, and perhaps even to the president himself, much as the scientists and economists have been able to do through the Office of the Scientific Adviser and the Council of Economic Advisers. Such an arrangement would undoubtedly raise the prestige of historians everywhere in the government and make government employment more attractive for historians than it now is.

There are many other services a historian in the Executive Office might perform for the profession. He could serve as a link between professional historical organizations and the government. Presumably his relations with the executive secretary of the American Historical Association would be close, and one would expect that the two would work together frequently on a number of matters. He could deal with the Civil Service Commission on the problem of attracting qualified historians into the federal service, with the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian Institution. One can imagine also that he might very well be helpful in dealing with the Congress on matters of appropriations, and with such departments as HEW in matters of teacher training, research, and educational programs. He could also represent the historians' interest on matters of security, access to records, declassification, and publications policies before the appropriate government agencies. Perhaps he could even urge on the president or his close advisers the advantages of a historical office on the NSC or cabinet level to prepare the kind of overarching history we need of such major national efforts as the war in Vietnam, civil rights, and the war on poverty.

I have no illusions about the difficulties of establishing a coordinating historial office on so high a level. Every agency from the Executive Office down could think of a dozen reasons why it should not be done, and I doubt very much that the idea would be greeted with enthusiasm by existing historical offices. Historians in a bureaucracy react much the same as other bureaucrats. Nor would I minimize the difficulties facing anyone taking on the task of coordinating the various government historical programs. He would meet opposition in all quarters, even from his fellow historians; he would encounter bureaucratic hurdles that might well throw him; he would have to hack his way through a jungle of rules and regulations. But if he had behind him the support and prestige of the historical profession he might accomplish a great deal. In view of the stake historians have in the historical activities of the federal government, the effort is certainly worth making.

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COMMENTS ON "THE HISTORIAN AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT"

HERMAN KAHN

Professor Louis Morton has unique qualifications for writing this stimulating article, which has all the qualities one would expect from a distinguished scholar who has spent many years as both a government and an academic historian. He has put the whole subject of the relationship of the historian to the federal government into sharp focus by summarizing the available information and by asking the right questions.

The first part of his paper is a careful survey of the historical activities of the federal government from its earliest days. For those who bemoan what they believe to be the undue recent expansion of federal activities, Morton's article is a useful reminder that during most of the nineteenth century our government was far more active in documentary publication than during the first half of the twentieth century. Only recently, with activation of the National Historical Publications Commission about twenty years ago, has the federal government again begun to assume its former role in historical publication.

My comments will be confined to Morton's view of the present relationship of the historian to the federal government. Implicit in his entire discussion is the concept, almost universal today among American academic historians, that one can truly function as a historian only when standing before a class, conducting a seminar, or engaging in research that will lead to a published monograph. From this special definition of "historian" and this limited view of his proper career arise some of the questions that trouble Morton about the historian in government. He says, for instance: "The problem for all historical agencies in the government is to find qualified historians who are willing to leave academic life for government employment." Morton clearly implies that all qualified historians are in academic life. Yet many able history graduate students would be willing to serve in government but for the fear—and Morton's paper reinforces that fear—that their peers will not regard them as true historians if they choose a career outside the academic community. This point is borne out by Morton's statement that "high caliber professionals" are not likely to enter government because their "reputation and mobility rest on the judgment of their peers," which assumes that no historian can gain permanent career satisfaction except in academic work. This assumption is further demonstrated by the statement that "historians in the government can be and are assigned all sorts of tasks, useful to the agency perhaps but which bear little relationship to history," which is a reflection of the academic belief that activities other than teaching, research, or writing "bear little relationship to history."

Here lies the crux of the problem of recruiting historians for the federal government, archival agencies, and documentary publications projects. By the

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time they finish their graduate training, most history students have acquired the mind-set of their teachers and advisers and believe they cannot be true historians outside an academic environment. If they do not already unconsciously accept this assumption, it is made vividly clear to them when they begin thinking about permanent employment. Normally, the faculty does not even suggest to better students the possibility of nonacademic careers. During the present employment crisis, however, a student may be advised to accept temporary government employment if he cannot possibly find a teaching position. He is not told that a historian may make a free and voluntary choice from among a number of careers. He is not told that employment in government service, archival work, documentary editing, museum work, or historic sites administration are equally acceptable with teaching, and that he should follow his own tastes and inclinations. Rather, he is given the overwhelming impression that the only truly acceptable occupation for a historian is college teaching; another job is only a temporary expedient "until the market opens up." Given this approach by faculty advisers, it is not hard to understand why nonacademic historical activities do not easily recruit able persons, although there is plenty of evidence to suggest that many talented young historians would prefer not to go into academic work and only do so because of the open and obvious distaste of their faculty advisers for any kind of historical activity other than college teaching and research. In fact, as Morton's paper shows, in academic circles nonacademic historical work is usually not regarded as true historical employment.

Those who worry about the difficulty experienced by nonacademic historical activities in recruiting able personnel must face the fact that there is only one solution to the problem. The historical profession must be persuaded that its members who prepare historical analyses of federal policies and problems for governmental use, administer masses of historical source materials, edit collections of historical documents for publication, or interpret historic sites and museum collections are in fact functioning as historians. Unless the profession can be brought to agree that there are many acceptable occupations for true historians, none of which is inherently superior to the others, young men and women who have decided to be historians will continue to believe that they cannot choose any except an academic career without forfeiting the esteem of their teachers and fellow students.

That it is not impossible to persuade a learned profession of the validity and worth of the work of its nonacademic practitioners is shown by the experience of economists, political scientists, statisticians, and physical scientists in the last generation. We must continue to hope that the view which the historical profession takes of its proper role and functions can be broadened.

Morton rightly emphasizes the importance and complexity of the problem of restrictions on access to governmental records. The first step in untying this enormously complicated knot is to keep clearly in mind the important differences between the separate categories of restricted papers, because there must be a different approach in resolving the difficulties in each of these categories. This Morton does not do. His discussion treats as a unit documents which are restricted by Executive Order 10501 because of alleged reasons of national security; are closed for various reasons by acts of Congress; or are restricted by the agencies that created them because of reasons of privacy, ordinary standards of propriety, or "executive privilege." He speaks of the "mass of classified material" but includes in this class papers

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"whose disclosure would violate individual rights." It confuses the issue to speak of materials whose disclosure would be a violation of individual rights as "classified materials," a phrase more properly used to designate security-classified documents. Morton also fails to mention the important effect on this problem of the Freedom of Information Act of 1966 and the fifty-year provision of the Federal Records Act.

Before substantial improvement can be made, these matters must be given close analysis by persons outside the federal government acting in the spirit of an informed and not unfriendly "consumerism." Recently an eminent historian discussed this whole problem at some length in the pages of the *New York Times Book Review,* but did not even mention Executive Order 10501 and the large number of agency security officers who individually and unilaterally administer and interpret that order. This is a prime example of a discussion of Hamlet with no mention of the prince of Denmark. Grease is of no help unless it is applied to the wheel that squeaks.

The historical profession has never really organized to make its weight and influence felt in reaching rational solutions to restrictions problems. Most historians approach this matter from the position of wishing to gain special or privileged access for themselves to material that is closed to others. To one longtime observer, at least, it seems that if all that individual energy and influence had been combined and wielded as one tool by the profession acting in unison the problem would be much closer to solution.

Morton has made the interesting suggestion that a central directing or coordinating office be set up to oversee all historical activity in the executive branch. This proposal has been informally advanced at least once before (during the Kennedy administration). The idea was confidentially commented on and kicked about in various historical offices in Washington at that time, but it came to nothing chiefly for the reasons so cogently summarized by Morton, who has not exaggerated the difficulties that would be encountered in establishing such an office.

The president could more easily designate one of his White House assistants to coordinate historical affairs in the executive branch. This would be in harmony with the pattern that has been developing in the White House Office for overseeing policy when related functions are carried on in several agencies of the executive branch. It would not now require new personnel, funds, and administrative orders. It would add prestige to the government's historical activities and would strengthen the position of government historians in their relationships with their nonhistorical colleagues in their own agencies. As a beginning, the White House staff member assigned to this task could at least require a monthly meeting of responsible heads of historical activities in all agencies. At such meetings they could exchange information and ideas and devise methods of working together on the personnel and access problems discussed in Morton's paper. At present there is distressingly little exchange of information and ideas among historical personnel in Washington, and there is no doubt that each would benefit greatly from a better knowledge of what other government historians are doing. If this kind of regular meeting, presided over by a member of the president's staff who had some historical training, could be institutionalized and made a permanent feature of the activities of the White House Office it might eventually develop into the coordinating office that Morton envisages. It would be much easier to begin in this way and it would at least be a beginning.

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